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*A tour of the
historic schools in
Jefferson City, Mo.*

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EAST SCHOOL

The Historic Schools of Jefferson City

Front cover: East School

Photo to right: West School

These two schools, East and West, both ca 1938, were financed by a federal grant from the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression.

All photos by Lee Gilleard

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The Historic Schools of Jefferson City



The first recorded school in what is now the state of Missouri was in St. Louis in 1774. A few years later, in 1808, the territorial legislature incorporated Ste. Genevieve Academy. Support for the academy came from tuition and donations, making it a private school rather than a public school supported by taxes.

By the late 1860s, 110 academies and their female-counterparts, seminaries, had been established. An education was not available for all of Missouri's children, however, only for those who could afford to pay for it.

The first recorded school in Jefferson City was taught by G.W. Miller in 1828 in a building located across the street from the Governor's Mansion on Madison Street. Miller's school was a subscription school. Along with academies and private tutors, subscription schools were the third type of school found in the state during the early years of statehood.



The old Female Seminary is located at 416-20 E. State St.

Groups of families formed an association to educate their children in a subscription school; the parents each contributed to a fund that was used to pay a teacher to teach their children.

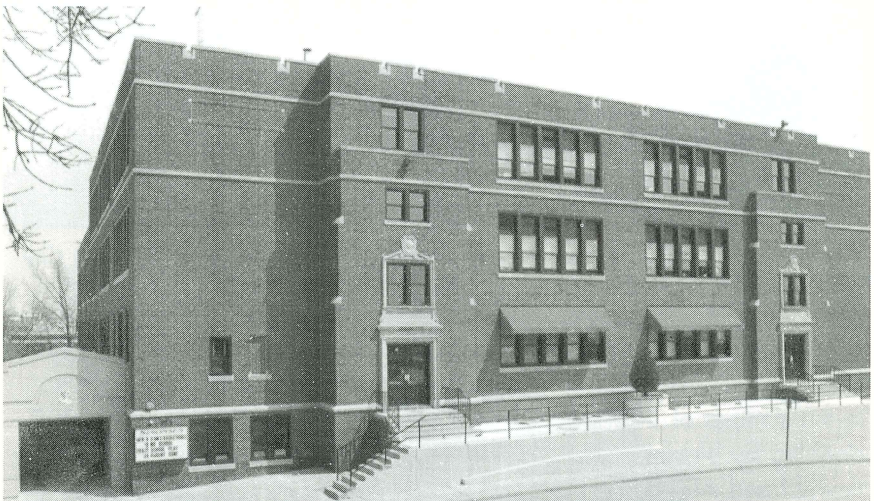
The oldest known remaining school buildings in Jefferson City were once part of the Jefferson City Female Seminary. Built ca 1880-'98, the buildings at 416-20 State St. are all that remains of a complex of seminary buildings dating from the 1830s. The two joined buildings were once used for both classroom space and dormitories for the young girls who lived too far away to travel on a daily basis. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000, the buildings are currently being rehabilitated as apartments and office space.

In 1835, Missouri legislators set up a set of laws for the establishment of public schools. These laws did not require towns to have a public school, however, and some were slow to react. Missourians were used to private schools and some feared that public (or common) schools might offer an inferior education to their children.

The citizens of Jefferson City were among the first in the state to react to the new public school laws. In March 1835, the recently organized Jefferson School Commissioners purchased for \$5 a lot on Miller Street

between Marshall and Jackson streets for the purpose of building a public school. A two-room log and frame building was built on the lot (nick-named "Hobo Hill") in ca 1836. A teacher was hired and the school opened for business in 1838 with between 15 and 20 students. The little school on Hobo Hill, along with dozens of private schools, continued to operate until the Civil War began in 1861. Nearly all of the schools in the state were closed for the duration of hostilities.

Following the war, Jefferson City's public school moved to a small brick building across Broadway Street from St. Peter's Cathedral. The first school building on Hobo Hill was still standing, but its condition was so poor that it was abandoned for better quarters.



"Hobo Hill," the location of a school for 165 years, was the site of Jefferson City's first public school, the first site of Lincoln University and the site of the city's first high school. The site is currently occupied by Simonsen Ninth Grade.



Central School at 315 E. Dunklin was built in 1919. It is now the Jefferson City Board of Education offices.

In the summer of 1866, R.B. Foster came to Jefferson City with \$6,000 donated by black Civil War soldiers and instructions to start a school for newly freed African Americans. Prior to the Civil War, it was illegal to teach blacks to read and write, so this new school was urgently needed. Everywhere Foster inquired about a building, he was turned away. Finally, he asked about the abandoned school on Hobo Hill, and it became the location of the new Lincoln Institute in 1866. The building

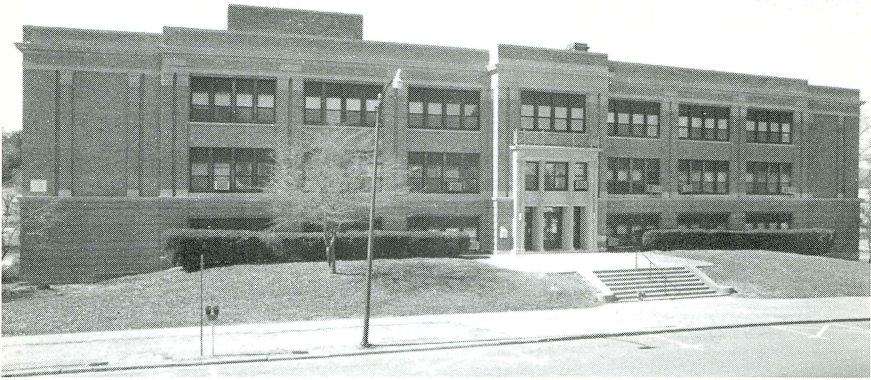
Foster referred to as an "old shanty" remained a school for blacks until 1874. Lincoln Institute became Lincoln University and moved to a new building nearby.

Hobo Hill, the first location for a public school in Jefferson City and the first location for Lincoln University, was to see many other firsts in the 20th century. The first separate high school building was erected on the site in 1905 and 1914 and was named after Ernst Simonsen. This modern brick building was the first to have a gymnasium/auditorium, which led to other firsts: bands, choirs, indoor sports, theater and on-site commencements (before Simonsen was built, commencements were usually held at Lohman's Opera House, 102 High St.). In 1937, the first Simonsen High School building was demolished and a new building built that still stands. There has been a school on Hobo Hill continuously for 165 years.

In 1925, a new high school was constructed at 214 Miller St. and the Hobo Hill building became a junior high. The large new high school building also housed a junior college on the third floor until the late



*West End
School, ca
1903, at 1107
W. Main is now
an apartment
building.*



This building, ca 1925, at 214 Miller St., was once a combined high school and junior college. It is now the Instructional Resource Center.

1950s. The building is now the Instructional Resource Center for the Jefferson City School District.

As the city expanded and added new suburbs over the years, new neighborhood elementary schools were constructed. Those school buildings still standing include the following: the (old) West End School at 1107 W. Main St., ca 1903, now an apartment building; Broadway School at Broadway and Dunklin streets, ca 1904, now the Carpenter's Building; Moreau Heights School at Hillcrest and Moreau Drive, ca 1914 and 1931, now a Montessori school and a restaurant; and Central School at 315 E. Dunklin St., ca 1919, now the Jefferson City Board of Education office.

Two schools were built with Works Progress Administration (WPA) grants during the Great Depression: East Elementary School at 1229 McCarty, ca 1938, and West Elementary School at 100 Dix Rd., also in 1938.

A school building boom occurred in the mid-1950s. As the post-World

War II “baby boomers” reached school age, the existing pre-war schools became very overcrowded and four new elementary schools were built: Southwest School in the 800 block of St. Mary’s Boulevard, ca 1954; South School at 301 Linden Dr., ca 1955; (new) Moreau Heights School at 1404 Hough Park Rd., ca 1955 and ‘62; and Thorpe Gordon School at 1201 Jackson St., ca 1956.

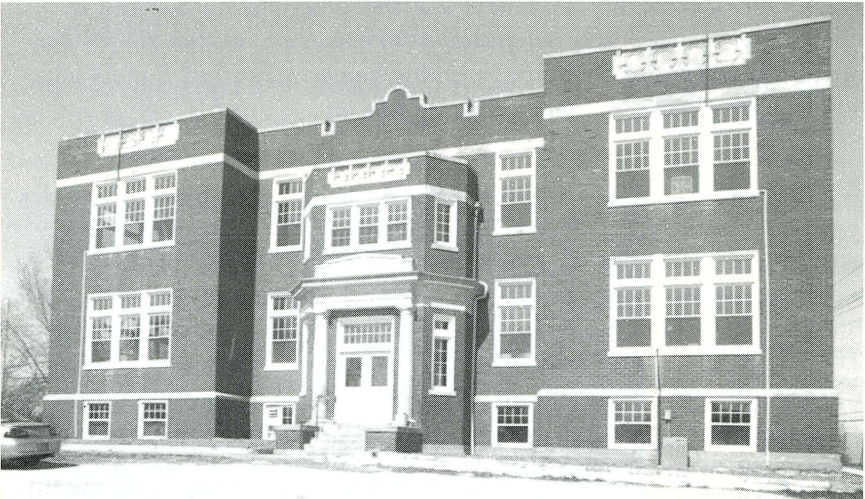
Another problem facing the school system in 1955 was one based on past practices. From 1866 until 1956, black and white students in Jefferson City attended separate schools. Integration of the city’s public schools began in 1954 and was completed in 1956. After the black students moved out of Washington School, on Elm Street between Lafayette and Cherry, it was used for a time by Lincoln University and then demolished. There are no historically black public elementary or secondary schools still standing in Jefferson City. However, this chapter in our history is represented by the George Washington Carver School in Fulton. The Carver School, built in 1937, was dedicated by Dr. George Washington Carver, the prominent scientist for whom the building was named. The building was purchased from the school district in 1989 by the Carver Memorial Corporation and is being restored as a museum. Two important historic Catholic schools are also located in Jefferson City:

Broadway School, 1904 and 1917, was in use as a school until 1955 when it was replaced by the new South School. It is now the Carpenter’s Building.

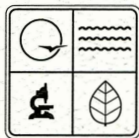


St. Peter's, in the 200 block of Broadway, which began in 1846 with standing buildings dating from ca 1889; and Immaculate Conception, in the 1200 block of McCarty, established in 1913, with school buildings dating from 1913, 1925 and the mid 20th century.

The information in this brochure was taken from Jerena East Giffen, "The House on Hobo Hill: The History of the Jefferson City Public Schools" published by the Jefferson City Public Schools in 1964.



Moreau Heights School, built in 1914, continued to serve children in the East End neighborhood until the new Moreau heights school was built in 1956.



Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program